

BY  
CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH  
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*Five and Twenty*





*Looking away*





## CHAPTER XXVI.

## NOBODY'S STATE OF MIND.

IF Arthur Clennam had not arrived at that wise decision firmly to restrain himself from loving Pet, he would have lived on in a state of much perplexity, involving difficult struggles with his own heart. Not the least of these would have been a contention, always waging within it, between a tendency to dislike Mr. Henry Gowan, if not to regard him with positive repugnance, and a whisper that the inclination was unworthy. A generous nature is not prone to strong aversions, and is slow to admit them even dispassionately; but when it finds ill-will gaining upon it, and can discern between-whiles that its origin is not dispassionate, such a nature becomes distressed.

Therefore Mr. Henry Gowan would have clouded Clennam's mind, and would have been far oftener present to it than more agreeable persons and subjects, but for the great prudence of his decision aforesaid. As it was, Mr. Gowan seemed transferred to Daniel Doyce's mind; at all events, it so happened that it usually fell to Mr. Doyce's turn, rather than to Clennam's, to speak of him in the friendly conversations they held together. These were of frequent occurrence now; as the two partners shared a portion of a roomy house in one of the grave old-fashioned City streets, lying not far from the Bank of England, by London Wall.

Mr. Doyce had been to Twickenham to pass the day. Clennam had excused himself. Mr. Doyce was just come home. He put in his head at the door of Clennam's sitting-room to say Good night.

"Come in, come in!" said Clennam.

"I saw you were reading," returned Doyce, as he entered, "and thought you might not care to be disturbed."

But for the notable resolution he had made, Clennam really might not have known what he had been reading; really might not have had his eyes upon the book for an hour past, though it lay open before him. He shut it up, rather quickly.

"Are they well?" he asked.

"Yes," said Doyce; "they are well. They are all well."

Daniel had an old workmanlike habit of carrying his pocket-handkerchief in his hat. He took it out and wiped his forehead with it, slowly repeating "they are all well. Miss Minnie looking particularly well, I thought."

"Any company at the cottage?"

"No, no company."

"And how did you get on, you four?" asked Clennam, gaily.

"There were five of us," returned his partner. "There was What's-his-name. He was there."

"Who is he?" said Clennam.

"Mr. Henry Gowan."

"Ah, to be sure!" cried Clennam, with unusual vivacity. "Yes! —I forgot him."

"As I mentioned, you may remember," said Daniel Doyce, "he is always there, on Sunday."

"Yes, yes," returned Clennam; "I remember now."

Daniel Doyce, still wiping his forehead, ploddingly repeated, "Yes. He was there, he was there. Oh yes, he was there. And his dog. *He* was there too."

"Miss Meagles is quite attached to—the—dog," observed Clennam.

"Quite so," assented his partner. "More attached to the dog than I am to the man."

"You mean Mr. ——?"

"I mean Mr. Gowan, most decidedly," said Daniel Doyce.

There was a gap in the conversation, which Clennam devoted to winding up his watch.

"Perhaps you are a little hasty in your judgment," he said. "Our judgments—I am supposing a general case——"

"Of course," said Doyce.

"Are so liable to be influenced by many considerations, which, almost without our knowing it, are unfair, that it is necessary to keep a guard upon them. For instance, Mr. ——"

"Gowan," quietly said Doyce, upon whom the utterance of the name almost always devolved.

"Is young and handsome, easy and quick, has talent, and has seen a good deal of various kinds of life. It might be difficult to give an unselfish reason for being prepossessed against him."

"Not difficult for me, I think, Clennam," returned his partner.

"I see him bringing present anxiety, and, I fear, future sorrow, into my old friend's house. I see him wearing deeper lines into my old friend's face, the nearer he draws to, and the oftener he looks at, the face of his daughter. In short, I see him with a net about the pretty and affectionate creature whom he will never make happy."

"We don't know," said Clennam, almost in the tone of a man in pain, "that he will not make her happy."

"We don't know," returned his partner, "that the earth will last another hundred years, but we think it highly probable."

"Well, well!" said Clennam, "we must be hopeful, and we must at least try to be, if not generous (which, in this case, we have no opportunity of being), just. We will not disparage this gentleman, because he is successful in his addresses to the beautiful object of his ambition; and we will not question her natural right to bestow her love on one whom she finds worthy of it."

"May be, my friend," said Doyce. "May be also, that she is too young and petted, too confiding and inexperienced, to discriminate well."

"That," said Clennam, "would be far beyond our power of correction."

Daniel Doyce shook his head gravely, and rejoined, "I fear so."

"Therefore, in a word," said Clennam, "we should make up our



minds that it is not worthy of us to say any ill of Mr. Gowan. It would be a poor thing to gratify a prejudice against him. And I resolve, for my part, not to depreciate him."

"I am not quite so sure of myself, and therefore I reserve my privilege of objecting to him," returned the other. "But, if I am not sure of myself, I am sure of you, Clennam, and I know what an upright man you are, and how much to be respected. Good night, my friend and partner!" He shook his hand in saying this, as if there had been something serious at the bottom of their conversation; and they separated.

By this time, they had visited the family on several occasions, and had always observed that even a passing allusion to Mr. Henry Gowan when he was not among them, brought back the cloud which had obscured Mr. Meagles's sunshine on the morning of the chance encounter at the Ferry. If Clennam had ever admitted the forbidden passion into his breast, this period might have been a period of real trial; under the actual circumstances, doubtless it was nothing—nothing.

Equally, if his heart had given entertainment to that prohibited guest, his silent fighting of his way through the mental condition of this period might have been a little meritorious. In the constant effort not to be betrayed into a new phase of the besetting sin of his experience, the pursuit of selfish objects by low and small means, and to hold instead to some high principle of honor and generosity, there might have been a little merit. In the resolution not even to avoid Mr. Meagles's house, lest, in the selfish sparing of himself, he should bring any slight distress upon the daughter through making her the cause of an estrangement which he believed the father would regret, there might have been a little merit. In the modest truthfulness of always keeping in view the greater equality of Mr. Gowan's years, and the greater attractions of his person and manner, there might have been a little merit. In doing all this and much more, in a perfectly unaffected way and with a manful and composed constancy, while the pain within him (peculiar as his life and history) was very sharp, there might have been some quiet strength of character. But, after the resolution he had made, of course he could have no such merits as these; and such a state of mind was nobody's—nobody's.

Mr. Gowan made it no concern of his whether it was nobody's or somebody's. He preserved his perfect serenity of manner on all occasions, as if the possibility of Clennam's presuming to have debated the great question were too distant and ridiculous to be imagined. He had always an affability to bestow on Clennam and an ease to treat him with, which might of itself (in the supposititious case of his not having taken that sagacious course) have been a very uncomfortable element in his state of mind.

"I quite regret you were not with us yesterday," said Mr. Henry Gowan, calling on Clennam next morning. "We had an agreeable day up the river there."

So he had heard, Arthur said.

"From your partner?" returned Henry Gowan. "What a dear old fellow he is!"

"I have a great regard for him."

"By Jove he is the finest creature!" said Gowan. "So fresh, so green, trusts in such wonderful things!"

Here was one of the many little rough points that had a tendency to grate on Clennam's hearing. He put it aside by merely repeating that he had a high regard for Mr. Doyce.

"He is charming! To see him mooning along to that time of life, laying down nothing by the way and picking up nothing by the way, is delightful. It warms a man. So unspoilt, so simple, such a good soul! Upon my life, Mr. Clennam, one feels desperately worldly and wicked, in comparison with such an innocent creature. I speak for myself, let me add, without including you. You are genuine, also."

"Thank you for the compliment," said Clennam, ill at ease; "you are too, I hope?"

"So so," rejoined the other. "To be candid with you, tolerably. I am not a great impostor. Buy one of my pictures, and I assure you, in confidence, it will not be worth the money. Buy one of another man's—any great professor who beats me hollow—and the chances are that the more you give him, the more he'll impose upon you. They all do it."

"All painters?"

"Painters, writers, patriots, all the rest who have stands in the market. Give almost any man I know, ten pounds, and he will impose upon you to a corresponding extent; a thousand pounds—to a corresponding extent; ten thousand pounds—to a corresponding extent. So great the success, so great the imposition. But what a capital world it is!" cried Gowan with warm enthusiasm. "What a jolly, excellent loveable world it is!"

"I had rather thought," said Clennam, "that the principle you mention was chiefly acted on by——"

"By the Barnacles?" interrupted Gowan, laughing.

"By the political gentlemen who condescend to keep the Circumlocution Office."

"Ah! Don't be hard upon the Barnacles," said Gowan, laughing afresh, "they are darling fellows! Even poor little Clarence, the born idiot of the family, is the most agreeable and most endearing blockhead! And by Jupiter, with a kind of cleverness in him too, that would astonish you!"

"It would. Very much," said Clennam, drily.

"And after all," cried Gowan, with that characteristic balancing of his which reduced everything in the wide world to the same light weight, "though I can't deny that the Circumlocution Office may ultimately shipwreck everybody and everything, still, that will probably not be in our time—and it's a school for gentlemen."

"It's a very dangerous, unsatisfactory, and expensive school to the people who pay to keep the pupils there, I am afraid," said Clennam, shaking his head.

"Ah! You are a terrible fellow," returned Gowan, airily. "I can understand how you have frightened that little donkey, Clarence, the most estimable of mooncalves (I really love him), nearly out of his wits. But enough of him, and of all the rest of them. I want to present you to my mother, Mr. Clennam. Pray do me the favor to give me the opportunity."



In nobody's state of mind, there was nothing Clennam would have desired less, or would have been more at a loss how to avoid.

"My mother lives in the most primitive manner down in that dreary red-brick dungeon at Hampton Court," said Gowan. "If you would make your own appointment, suggest your own day for permitting me to take you there to dinner, you would be bored and she would be charmed. Really that's the state of the case."

What could Clennam say after this? His retiring character included a great deal that was simple in the best sense, because unpractised and unused; and, in his simplicity and modesty, he could only say that he was happy to place himself at Mr. Gowan's disposal. Accordingly he said it, and the day was fixed. And a dreaded day it was on his part, and a very unwelcome day when it came, and they went down to Hampton Court together.

The venerable inhabitants of that venerable pile seemed, in those times, to be encamped there like a sort of civilised gipsies. There was a temporary air about their establishments, as if they were going away the moment they could get anything better; there was also a dissatisfied air about themselves, as if they took it very ill that they had not already got something much better. Genteel blinds and make-shifts were more or less observable as soon as their doors were opened; screens not half high enough, which made dining-rooms out of arched passages, and warded off obscure corners where footboys slept at night with their heads among the knives and forks; curtains which called upon you to believe that they didn't hide anything; panes of glass which requested you not to see them; many objects of various forms, feigning to have no connexion with their guilty secret, a bed; disguised traps in walls, which were clearly coal-cellars; affectations of no thoroughfares, which were evidently doors to little kitchens. Mental reservations and artful mysteries grew out of these things. Callers, looking steadily into the eyes of their receivers, pretended not to smell cooking three feet off; people, confronting closets accidentally left open, pretended not to see bottles; visitors, with their heads against a partition of thin canvas and a page and a young female at high words on the other side, made believe to be sitting in a primeval silence. There was no end to the small social accommodation-bills of this nature which the gipsies of gentility were constantly drawing upon, and accepting for, one another.

Some of these Bohemians were of an irritable temperament, as constantly soured and vexed by two mental trials: the first, the consciousness that they had never got enough out of the public; the second, the consciousness that the public were admitted into the building. Under the latter great wrong, a few suffered dreadfully—particularly on Sundays, when they had for some time expected the earth to open and swallow the public up; but which desirable event had not yet occurred, in consequence of some reprehensible laxity in the arrangements of the Universe.

Mrs. Gowan's door was attended by a family servant of several years' standing, who had his own crow to pluck with the public, concerning a situation in the Post Office which he had been for some time expecting, and to which he was not yet appointed. He perfectly knew that the public could never have got him in, but he grimly gratified

himself with the idea that the public kept him out. Under the influence of this injury (and perhaps of some little straitness and irregularity in the matter of wages), he had grown neglectful of his person and morose in mind; and now beholding in Clennam one of the degraded body of his oppressors, received him with ignominy.

Mrs. Gowan, however, received him with condescension. He found her a courtly old lady, formerly a Beauty, and still sufficiently well-favoured to have dispensed with the powder on her nose, and a certain impossible bloom under each eye. She was a little lofty with him: so was another old lady, dark-browed and high-nosed, and who must have had something real about her or she could not have existed, but it was certainly not her hair or her teeth or her figure or her complexion; so was a grey old gentleman of dignified and sullen appearance; both of whom had come to dinner. But, as they had all been in the British Embassy way in sundry parts of the earth, and as a British Embassy cannot better establish a character with the Circumlocution Office than by treating its compatriots with illimitable contempt (else it would become like the Embassies of other countries), Clennam felt that on the whole they let him off lightly.

The dignified old gentleman turned out to be Lord Lancaster Stiltstalking, who had been maintained by the Circumlocution Office for many years as a representative of the Britannic Majesty abroad. This noble Refrigerator had iced several European courts in his time, and had done it with such complete success that the very name of Englishman yet struck cold to the stomachs of foreigners who had the distinguished honor of remembering him, at a distance of a quarter of a century.

He was now in retirement, and hence (in a ponderous white cravat, like a stiff snow-drift) was so obliging as to shade the dinner. There was a whisper of the pervading Bohemian character in the nomadic nature of the service, and its curious races of plates and dishes; but the noble Refrigerator, infinitely better than plate or porcelain, made it superb. He shaded the dinner, cooled the wines, chilled the gravy, and blighted the vegetables.

There was only one other person in the room: a microscopically small footboy, who waited on the malevolent man who hadn't got into the Post-office. Even this youth, if his jacket could have been unbuttoned and his heart laid bare, would have been seen, as a distant adherent of the Barnacle family, already to aspire to a situation under Government.

Mrs. Gowan with a gentle melancholy upon her, occasioned by her son's being reduced to court the swinish public as a follower of the low Arts, instead of asserting his birthright and putting a ring through its nose as an acknowledged Barnacle, headed the conversation at dinner on the evil days. It was then that Clennam learned for the first time what little pivots this great world goes round upon.

"If John Barnacle," said Mrs. Gowan, after the degeneracy of the times had been fully ascertained, "if John Barnacle had but abandoned his most unfortunate idea of conciliating the mob, all would have been well, and I think the country would have been preserved."

The old lady with the high nose assented, but added that if Augustus



Stiltstalking had in a general way ordered the cavalry out with instructions to charge, she thought the country would have been preserved.

The noble Refrigerator assented; but added that if William Barnacle and Tudor Stiltstalking, when they came over to one another and formed their ever memorable coalition, had boldly muzzled the newspapers, and rendered it penal for any Editor-person to presume to discuss the conduct of any appointed authority abroad or at home, he thought the country would have been preserved.

It was agreed that the country (another word for the Barnacles and Stiltstalkings) wanted preserving, but how it came to want preserving was not so clear. It was only clear that the question was all about John Barnacle, Augustus Stiltstalking, William Barnacle and Tudor Stiltstalking, Tom, Dick, or Harry Barnacle or Stiltstalking, because there was nobody else but mob. And this was the feature of the conversation which impressed Clennam, as a man not used to it, very disagreeably: making him doubt if it were quite right to sit there, silently hearing a great nation narrowed to such little bounds. Remembering, however, that in the Parliamentary debates, whether on the life of that nation's body or the life of its soul, the question was usually all about and between John Barnacle, Augustus Stiltstalking, William Barnacle and Tudor Stiltstalking, Tom, Dick, or Harry Barnacle or Stiltstalking, and nobody else; he said nothing on the part of mob, bethinking himself that mob was used to it.

Mr. Henry Gowan seemed to have a malicious pleasure in playing off the three talkers against each other, and in seeing Clennam startled by what they said. Having as supreme a contempt for the class that had thrown him off, as for the class that had not taken him on, he had no personal disquiet in anything that passed. His healthy state of mind appeared even to derive a gratification from Clennam's position of embarrassment and isolation among the good company; and if Clennam had been in that condition with which Nobody was incessantly contending, he would have suspected it, and would have struggled with the suspicion as a meanness, even while he sat at the table.

In the course of a couple of hours the noble Refrigerator, at no time less than a hundred years behind the period, got about five centuries in arrear, and delivered solemn political oracles appropriate to that epoch. He finished by freezing a cup of tea for his own drinking, and retiring at his lowest temperature.

Then Mrs. Gowan, who had been accustomed in her days of state to retain a vacant arm-chair beside her to which to summon her devoted slaves, one by one, for short audiences as marks of her especial favor, invited Clennam with a turn of her fan to approach the presence. He obeyed, and took the tripod recently vacated by Lord Lancaster Stiltstalking.

"Mr. Clennam," said Mrs. Gowan, "apart from the happiness I have in becoming known to you, though in this odiously inconvenient place—a mere barrack—there is a subject on which I am dying to speak to you. It is the subject in connection with which my son first had, I believe, the pleasure of cultivating your acquaintance."

Clennam inclined his head, as a generally suitable reply to what he did not yet quite understand.

"First," said Mrs. Gowan, "now is she really pretty?"

In nobody's difficulties, he would have found it very difficult to answer; very difficult indeed to smile, and say "Who?"

"Oh! You know!" she returned. "This flame of Henry's. This unfortunate fancy. There! If it is a point of honor that I should originate the name—Miss Mickles—Miggles."

"Miss Meagles," said Clennam, "is very beautiful."

"Men are so often mistaken on those points," returned Mrs. Gowan, shaking her head, "that I candidly confess to you I feel anything but sure of it, even now; though it is something to have Henry corroborated with so much gravity and emphasis. He picked the people up at Rome, I think?"

The phrase would have given nobody mortal offence. Clennam replied "Excuse me, I doubt if I understand your expression."

"Picked the people up," said Mrs. Gowan, tapping the sticks of her closed fan (a large green one, which she used as a hand-screen) upon her little table. "Came upon them. Found them out. Stumbled against them."

"The people?"

"Yes. The Miggles people."

"I really cannot say," said Clennam, "where my friend Mr. Meagles first presented Mr. Henry Gowan to his daughter."

"I am pretty sure he picked her up at Rome; but never mind where—somewhere. Now (this is entirely between ourselves), *is* she very plebeian?"

"Really, ma'am," returned Clennam, "I am so undoubtedly plebeian myself, that I do not feel qualified to judge."

"Very neat!" said Mrs. Gowan, coolly unfurling her screen. "Very happy! From which I infer that you secretly think her manner equal to her looks?"

Clennam, after a moment's stiffness, bowed.

"That's comforting, and I hope you may be right. Did Henry tell me you had travelled with them?"

"I travelled with my friend Mr. Meagles, and his wife and daughter, during some months." (Nobody's heart might have been wrung by the remembrance.)

"Really comforting, because you must have had a large experience of them. You see, Mr. Clennam, this thing has been going on for a long time, and I find no improvement in it. Therefore to have the opportunity of speaking to one so well informed about it as yourself, is an immense relief to me. Quite a boon. Quite a blessing, I am sure."

"Pardon me," returned Clennam, "but I am not in Mr. Henry Gowan's confidence. I am far from being so well informed as you suppose me to be. Your mistake makes my position a very delicate one. No word on this topic has ever passed between Mr. Henry Gowan and myself."

Mrs. Gowan glanced at the other end of the room, where her son was playing *écarté* on a sofa, with the old lady who was for a charge of cavalry.

"Not in his confidence? No," said Mrs. Gowan. "No word has passed



between you? No. That I can imagine. But there are unexpressed confidences, Mr. Clennam; and as you have been together intimately among these people, I cannot doubt that a confidence of that sort exists in the present case. Perhaps you have heard that I have suffered the keenest distress of mind from Henry's having taken to a pursuit which—well!" shrugging her shoulders, "a very respectable pursuit, I dare say, and some artists are, as artists, quite superior persons; still, we never yet in our family have gone beyond an Amateur, and it is a pardonable weakness to feel a little——"

As Mrs. Gowan broke off to heave a sigh, Clennam, however resolute to be magnanimous, could not keep down the thought that there was mighty little danger of the family's ever going beyond an Amateur, even as it was.

"Henry," the mother resumed, "is self-willed and resolute; and as these people naturally strain every nerve to catch him, I can entertain very little hope, Mr. Clennam, that the thing will be broken off. I apprehend the girl's fortune will be very small; Henry might have done much better; there is scarcely anything to compensate for the connection: still, he acts for himself; and if I find no improvement within a short time, I see no other course than to resign myself, and make the best of these people. I am infinitely obliged to you for what you have told me."

As she shrugged her shoulders, Clennam stiffly bowed again. With an uneasy flush upon his face, and hesitation in his manner, he then said, in a still lower tone than he had adopted yet:

"Mrs. Gowan, I scarcely know how to acquit myself of what I feel to be a duty, and yet I must ask you for your kind consideration in attempting to discharge it. A misconception on your part, a very great misconception if I may venture to call it so, seems to require setting right. You have supposed Mr. Meagles and his family to strain every nerve, I think you said——"

"Every nerve," repeated Mrs. Gowan, looking at him in calm obstinacy, with her green fan between her face and the fire.

"To secure Mr. Henry Gowan?"

The lady placidly assented.

"Now that is so far," said Arthur, "from being the case, that I know Mr. Meagles to be unhappy in this matter; and to have interposed all reasonable obstacles, with the hope of putting an end to it."

Mrs. Gowan shut up her great green fan, tapped him on the arm with it, and tapped her smiling lips. "Why, of course," said she. "Just what I mean."

Arthur watched her face for some explanation of what she did mean.

"Are you really serious, Mr. Clennam? Don't you see?"

Arthur did not see; and said so.

"Why, don't I know my son, and don't I know that this is exactly the way to hold him?" said Mrs. Gowan, contemptuously; "and do not these Miggles people know it, at least as well as I? Oh, shrewd people, Mr. Clennam: evidently people of business! I believe Miggles belonged to a Bank. It ought to have been a very profitable Bank, if he had much to do with its management. This is very well done, indeed."

"I beg and entreat you, ma'am——" Arthur interposed.

"Oh Mr. Clennam, can you really be so credulous!"

It made such a painful impression upon him to hear her talking in this haughty tone, and to see her patting her contemptuous lips with her fan, that he said very earnestly, "Believe me, ma'am, this is unjust, a perfectly groundless suspicion."

"Suspicion?" repeated Mrs. Gowan. "Not suspicion, Mr. Clennam, Certainty. It is very knowingly done indeed, and seems to have taken *you* in completely." She laughed; and again sat tapping her lips with her fan, and tossing her head, as if she added, "Don't tell me. I know such people will do anything for the honor of such an alliance."

At this opportune moment, the cards were thrown up, and Mr. Henry Gowan came across the room saying, "Mother, if you can spare Mr. Clennam for this time, we have a long way to go, and it's getting late." Mr. Clennam thereupon rose, as he had no choice but to do; and Mrs. Gowan showed him, to the last, the same look and the same tapped contemptuous lips.

"You have had a portentously long audience of my mother," said Gowan, as the door closed upon them. "I fervently hope she has not bored you?"

"Not at all," said Clennam.

They had a little open phaeton for the journey, and were soon in it on the road home. Gowan, driving, lighted a cigar; Clennam declined one. Do what he would, he fell into such a mood of abstraction, that Gowan said again, "I am very much afraid my mother has bored you?" To which he roused himself to answer, "Not at all;" and soon relapsed again.

In that state of mind which rendered nobody uneasy, his thoughtfulness would have turned principally on the man at his side. He would have thought of the morning when he first saw him rooting out the stones with his heel, and would have asked himself "Does he jerk me out of the path in the same careless, cruel way?" He would have thought, had this introduction to his mother been brought about by him because he knew what she would say, and that he could thus place his position before a rival and loftily warn him off, without himself reposing a word of confidence in him? He would have thought, even if there were no such design as that, had he brought him there to play with his repressed emotions, and torment him? The current of these meditations would have been stayed sometimes by a rush of shame, bearing a remonstrance to himself from his own open nature, representing that to shelter such suspicions, even for the passing moment, was not to hold the high, unenvious course he had resolved to keep. At those times, the striving within him would have been hardest; and looking up and catching Gowan's eyes, he would have started as if he had done him an injury.

Then, looking at the dark road and its uncertain objects, he would have gradually trailed off again into thinking, "Where are we driving, he and I, I wonder, on the darker road of life? How will it be with us, and with her, in the obscure distance?" Thinking of her, he would have been troubled anew with a reproachful misgiving



that it was not even loyal to her to dislike him, and that in being so easily prejudiced against him he was less deserving of her than at first.

"You are evidently out of spirits," said Gowan; "I am very much afraid my mother must have bored you dreadfully."

"Believe me, not at all," said Clennam. "It's nothing—nothing!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### FIVE-AND-TWENTY.

A FREQUENTLY recurring doubt, whether Mr. Pancks's desire to collect information relative to the Dorrit family could have any possible bearing on the misgivings he had imparted to his mother on his return from his long exile, caused Arthur Clennam much uneasiness at this period. What Mr. Pancks already knew about the Dorrit family, what more he really wanted to find out, and why he should trouble his busy head about them at all, were questions that often perplexed him. Mr. Pancks was not a man to waste his time and trouble in researches prompted by idle curiosity. That he had a specific object Clennam could not doubt. And whether the attainment of that object by Mr. Pancks's industry might bring to light, in some untimely way, secret reasons which had induced his mother to take Little Dorrit by the hand, was a serious speculation.

Not that he ever wavered, either in his desire or his determination to repair a wrong that had been done in his father's time, should a wrong come to light, and be reparable. The shadow of a supposed act of injustice, which had hung over him since his father's death, was so vague and formless that it might be the result of a reality widely remote from his idea of it. But, if his apprehensions should prove to be well founded, he was ready at any moment to lay down all he had, and begin the world anew. As the fierce dark teaching of his childhood had never sunk into his heart, so the first article in his code of morals was, that he must begin, in practical humility, with looking well to his feet on Earth, and that he could never mount on wings of words to Heaven. Duty on earth, restitution on earth, action on earth: these first, as the first steep steps upward. Strait was the gate and narrow was the way; far straiter and narrower than the broad high road paved with vain professions and vain repetitions, motes from other men's eyes and liberal delivery of others to the judgment—all cheap materials, costing absolutely nothing.

No. It was not a selfish fear or hesitation that rendered him uneasy, but a mistrust lest Pancks might not observe his part of the understanding between them, and, making any discovery, might take some course upon it without imparting it to him. On the other hand, when he recalled his conversation with Pancks, and the little reason he had to suppose that there was any likelihood of that strange personage being on that track at all, there were times when he wondered

that he made so much of it. Laboring in this sea, as all barks labor in cross seas, he tossed about, and came to no haven.

The removal of Little Dorrit herself from their customary association, did not mend the matter. She was so much out, and so much in her own room, that he began to miss her and to find a blank in her place. He had written to her to enquire if she were better, and she had written back, very gratefully and earnestly, telling him not to be uneasy on her behalf, for she was quite well; but he had not seen her, for what, in their intercourse, was a long time.

He returned home one evening from an interview with her father, who had mentioned that she was out visiting—which was what he always said, when she was hard at work to buy his supper—and found Mr. Meagles in an excited state walking up and down his room. On his opening the door, Mr. Meagles stopped, faced round, and said,

“Clennam!—Tattycoram!”

“What’s the matter?”

“Lost!”

“Why, bless my heart alive!” cried Clennam, in amazement. “What do you mean?”

“Wouldn’t count five-and-twenty, sir; couldn’t be got to do it; stopped at eight, and took herself off.”

“Left your house?”

“Never to come back,” said Mr. Meagles, shaking his head. “You don’t know that girl’s passionate and proud character. A team of horses couldn’t draw her back now; the bolts and bars of the old Bastille couldn’t keep her.”

“How did it happen? Pray sit down and tell me.”

“As to how it happened, it’s not so easy to relate; because you must have the unfortunate temperament of the poor impetuous girl herself, before you can fully understand it. But it came about in this way. Pet and Mother and I have been having a good deal of talk together, of late. I’ll not disguise from you, Clennam, that those conversations have not been of as bright a kind as I could wish; they have referred to our going away again. In proposing to do which, I have had, in fact, an object.”

Nobody’s heart beat quickly.

“An object,” said Mr. Meagles, after a moment’s pause, “that I will not disguise from you, either, Clennam. There’s an inclination on the part of my dear child which I am sorry for. Perhaps you guess the person. Henry Gowan.”

“I was not unprepared to hear it.”

“Well!” said Mr. Meagles, with a heavy sigh, “I wish to God you had never had to hear it. However, so it is. Mother and I have done all we could to get the better of it, Clennam. We have tried tender advice, we have tried time, we have tried absence. As yet, of no use. Our late conversations have been upon the subject of going away for another year at least, in order that there might be an entire separation and breaking off for that term. Upon that question, Pet has been unhappy, and therefore Mother and I have been unhappy.”



Clennam said that he could easily believe it.

"Well!" continued Mr. Meagles in an apologetic way, "I admit as a practical man, and I am sure Mother would admit as a practical woman, that we do, in families, magnify our troubles and make mountains of our molehills, in a way that is calculated to be rather trying to people who look on—to mere outsiders you know, Clennam. Still, Pet's happiness or unhappiness is quite a life or death question with us; and we may be excused, I hope, for making much of it. At all events, it might have been borne by Tattycoram. Now, don't you think so?"

"I do indeed think so," returned Clennam, in most emphatic recognition of this very moderate expectation.

"No, sir," said Mr. Meagles, shaking his head ruefully. "She couldn't stand it. The chafing and firing of that girl, the wearing and tearing of that girl within her own breast, has been such that I have softly said to her again and again in passing her, 'Five-and-twenty, Tattycoram, five-and-twenty!' I heartily wish she could have gone on counting five-and-twenty day and night, and then it wouldn't have happened."

Mr. Meagles, with a despondent countenance in which the goodness of his heart was even more expressed than in his times of cheerfulness and gaiety, stroked his face down from his forehead to his chin, and shook his head again.

"I said to Mother (not that it was necessary, for she would have thought it all for herself), we are practical people, my dear, and we know her story; we see, in this unhappy girl, some reflection of what was raging in her mother's heart before ever such a creature as this poor thing was, in the world; we'll gloss her temper over, Mother, we won't notice it at present, my dear, we'll take advantage of some better disposition in her, another time. So we said nothing. But, do what we would, it seems as if it was to be; she broke out violently one night."

"How, and why?"

"If you ask me Why," said Mr. Meagles, a little disturbed by the question, for he was far more intent on softening her case than the family's, "I can only refer you to what I have just repeated as having been pretty near my words to Mother. As to How, we had said Good night to Pet in her presence (very affectionately, I must allow), and she had attended Pet upstairs—you remember she was her maid. Perhaps Pet, having been out of sorts, may have been a little more inconsiderate than usual in requiring services of her: but I don't know that I have any right to say so; she was always thoughtful and gentle."

"The gentlest mistress in the world."

"Thank you, Clennam," said Mr. Meagles, shaking him by the hand; "you have often seen them together. Well! We presently heard this unfortunate Tattycoram loud and angry, and before we could ask what was the matter, Pet came back in a tremble, saying she was frightened of her. Close after her came Tattycoram, in a flaming rage. 'I hate you all three,' says she, stamping her foot at us. 'I am bursting with hate of the whole house.'"

"Upon which you——?"

"I?" said Mr. Meagles, with a plain good faith, that might have commanded the belief of Mrs. Gowan herself: "I said, count five-and-twenty, Tattycoram."

Mr. Meagles again stroked his face and shook his head, with an air of profound regret.

"She was so used to do it, Clennam, that even then, such a picture of passion as you never saw, she stopped short, looked me full in the face, and counted (as I made out) to eight. But she couldn't control herself to go any further. There she broke down, poor thing, and gave the other seventeen to the four winds. Then it all burst out. She detested us, she was miserable with us, she couldn't bear it, she wouldn't bear it, she was determined to go away. She was younger than her young mistress, and would she remain to see *her* always held up as the only creature who was young and interesting, and to be cherished and loved? No. She wouldn't, she wouldn't, she wouldn't! What did we think she, Tattycoram, might have been if she had been caressed and cared for in her childhood, like her young mistress? As good as her? Ah! Perhaps fifty times as good. When we pretended to be so fond of one another, we exulted over her; that was what we did; we exulted over her, and shamed her. And all in the house did the same. They talked about their fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters; they liked to drag them up, before her face. There was Mrs. Tiekit, only yesterday, when her little grandchild was with her, had been amused by the child's trying to call her (Tattycoram) by the wretched name we gave her; and had laughed at the name. Why, who didn't; and who were we that we should have a right to name her like a dog or a cat? But, she didn't care. She would take no more benefits from us; she would fling us her name back again, and she would go. She would leave us that minute, no body should stop her, and we should never hear of her again."

Mr. Meagles had recited all this with such a vivid remembrance of his original, that he was almost as flushed and hot by this time as he described her to have been.

"Ah, well!" he said, wiping his face. "It was of no use trying reason then, with that vehement panting creature (Heaven knows what her mother's story must have been); so I quietly told her that she should not go at that late hour of night, and I gave her my hand and took her to her room, and locked the house doors. But she was gone this morning."

"And you know no more of her?"

"No more," returned Mr. Meagles. "I have been hunting about all day. She must have gone very early and very silently. I have found no trace of her, down about us."

"Stay! You want," said Clennam, after a moment's reflection, "to see her? I assume that?"

"Yes, assuredly; I want to give her another chance; Mother and Pet want to give her another chance; come! You yourself," said Mr. Meagles, persuasively, as if the provocation to be angry were not his own at all, "want to give the poor passionate girl another chance, I know, Clennam."



"It would be strange and hard indeed if I did not," said Clennam, "when you are all so forgiving. What I was going to ask you was, have you thought of that Miss Wade?"

"I have. I did not think of her until I had pervaded the whole of our neighbourhood, and I don't know that I should have done so then, but for finding Mother and Pet, when I went home, full of the idea that Tattycoram must have gone to her. Then, of course, I recalled what she said that day at dinner when you were first with us."

"Have you any idea where Miss Wade is to be found?"

"To tell you the truth," returned Mr. Meagles, "it's because I have an added jumble of a notion on that subject, that you found me waiting here. There is one of those odd impressions in my house which do mysteriously get into houses sometimes, which nobody seems to have picked up in a distinct form from anybody, and yet which everybody seems to have got hold of loosely from somebody and let go again, that she lives, or was living, thereabouts." Mr. Meagles handed him a slip of paper, on which was written the name of one of the dull bye-streets in the Grosvenor region, near Park Lane.

"Here is no number," said Arthur, looking over it.

"No number, my dear Clennam?" returned his friend. "No anything! The very name of the street may have been floating in the air, for, as I tell you, none of my people can say where they got it from. However, it's worth an inquiry; and as I would rather make it in company than alone, and as you too were a fellow-traveller of that immovable woman's, I thought perhaps——" Clennam finished the sentence for him by taking up his hat again, and saying he was ready.

It was now summer-time; a grey, hot, dusty evening. They rode to the top of Oxford Street, and, there alighting, dived in among the great streets of melancholy stateliness, and the little streets that try to be as stately and succeed in being more melancholy, of which there is a labyrinth near Park Lane. Wildernesses of corner-houses, with barbarous old porticoes and appurtenances; horrors that came into existence under some wrong-headed person in some wrong-headed time, still demanding the blind admiration of all ensuing generations and determined to do so until they tumbled down; frowned upon the twilight. Parasite little tenements with the cramp in their whole frame, from the dwarf hall-door on the giant model of His Grace's in the Square, to the squeezed window of the boudoir commanding the dunghills in the Mews, made the evening doleful. Ricketty dwellings of undoubted fashion, but of a capacity to hold nothing comfortably except a dismal smell, looked like the last result of the great mansions' breeding in-and-in; and, where their little supplementary bows and balconies were supported on thin iron columns, seemed to be scrofulously resting upon crutches. Here and there a Hatchment, with the whole science of Heraldry in it, loomed down upon the street, like an Archbishop discoursing on Vanity. The shops, few in number, made no show; for popular opinion was as nothing to them. The pastry-cook knew who was on his books, and in that knowledge could be calm, with a few glass cylinders of dower pepper-mint-drops in his window, and half-a-dozen ancient specimens

of currant jelly. A few oranges formed the greengrocer's whole concession to the vulgar mind. A single basket made of moss, once containing plovers' eggs, held all that the poulterer had to say to the rabble. Everybody in those streets seemed (which is always the case at that hour and season) to be gone out to dinner, and nobody seemed to be giving the dinners they had gone to. On the door-steps there were lounging, footmen with bright parti-colored plumage and white polls, like an extinct race of monstrous birds; and butlers, solitary men of recluse demeanour, each of whom appeared distrustful of all other butlers. The roll of carriages in the Park was done for the day; the street lamps were lighting; and wicked little grooms in the tightest fitting garments, with twists in their legs answering to the twists in their minds, hung about in pairs, chewing straw and exchanging fraudulent secrets. The spotted dogs who went out with the carriages, and who were so associated with splendid equipages, that it looked like a condescension in those animals to come out without them, accompanied helpers to and fro on messages. Here and there was a retiring public-house which did not require to be supported on the shoulders of the people, and where gentlemen out of livery were not much wanted.

This last discovery was made by the two friends in pursuing their inquiries. Nothing was there, or anywhere, known of such a person as Miss Wade, in connection with the street they sought. It was one of the parasite streets; long, regular, narrow, dull, and gloomy; like a brick and mortar funeral. They enquired at several little area gates, where a dejected youth stood spiking his chin on the summit of a precipitous little shoot of wooden steps, but could gain no information. They walked up the street on one side of the way, and down it on the other, what time two vociferous news-sellers, announcing an extraordinary event that had never happened and never would happen, pitched their hoarse voices into the secret chambers; but nothing came of it. At length they stood at the corner from which they had begun, and it had fallen quite dark, and they were no wiser.

It happened that in the street they had several times passed a dingy house, apparently empty, with bills in the windows, announcing that it was to let. The bills, as a variety in the funeral procession, almost amounted to a decoration. Perhaps because they kept the house separate in his mind, or perhaps because Mr. Meagles and himself had twice agreed in passing, "It is clear she don't live there," Clennam now proposed that they should go back and try that house before finally going away. Mr. Meagles agreed, and back they went.

They knocked once, and they rang once, without any response. "Empty," said Mr. Meagles, listening. "Once more," said Clennam, and knocked again. After that knock they heard a movement below, and somebody shuffling up towards the door.

The confined entrance was so dark, that it was impossible to make out distinctly what kind of person opened the door; but it appeared to be an old woman. "Excuse our troubling you," said Clennam. "Pray can you tell us where Miss Wade lives?" The voice in the darkness unexpectedly replied, "Lives here."

"Is she at home?"



No answer coming, Mr. Meagles asked again. "Pray, is she at home?"

After another delay, "I suppose she is," said the voice abruptly; "you had better come in, and I'll ask."

They were summarily shut into the close black house; and the figure rustling away, and speaking from a higher level, said, "Come up if you please; you can't tumble over anything." They groped their way up stairs towards a faint light, which proved to be the light of the street shining through a window; and the figure left them shut up in an airless room.

"This is odd, Clennam," said Mr. Meagles, softly.

"Odd enough," assented Clennam, in the same tone, "but we have succeeded; that's the main point. Here's a light coming!"

The light was a lamp, and the bearer was an old woman: very dirty, very wrinkled and dry. "She's at home," she said (and the voice was the same that had spoken before); "she'll come directly." Having set the lamp down on the table, the old woman dusted her hands on her apron, which she might have done for ever without cleaning them, looked at the visitors with a dim pair of eyes, and backed out.

The lady whom they had come to see, if she were the present occupant of the house, appeared to have taken up her quarters there, as she might have established herself in an Eastern caravanserai. A small square of carpet in the middle of the room, a few articles of furniture that evidently did not belong to the room, and a disorder of trunks and travelling articles, formed the whole of her surroundings. Under some former regular inhabitant, the stifling little apartment had broken out into a pier-glass and a gilt table; but the gilding was as faded as last year's flowers, and the glass was so clouded that it seemed to hold in magic preservation all the fogs and bad weather it had ever reflected. The visitors had had a minute or two to look about them, when the door opened and Miss Wade came in.

She was exactly the same as when they had parted. Just as handsome, just as scornful, just as repressed. She manifested no surprise in seeing them, nor any other emotion. She requested them to be seated; and declining to take a seat herself, at once anticipated any introduction of their business.

"I apprehend," she said, "that I know the cause of your favoring me with this visit. We may come to it at once."

"The cause then, ma'am," said Mr. Meagles, "is Tattycoram."

"So I supposed."

"Miss Wade," said Mr. Meagles, "will you be so kind as to say whether you know anything of her?"

"Surely. I know she is here with me."

"Then, ma'am," said Mr. Meagles, "allow me to make known to you that I shall be happy to have her back, and that my wife and daughter will be happy to have her back. She has been with us a long time, we don't forget her claims upon us, and I hope we know how to make allowances."

"You hope you know how to make allowances?" she returned, in a level, measured voice. "For what?"

"I think my friend would say, Miss Wade," Arthur Clennam inter-

posed, seeing Mr. Meagles rather at a loss, "for the passionate sense that sometimes comes upon the poor girl, of being at a disadvantage. Which occasionally gets the better of better remembrances."

The lady broke into a smile, as she turned her eyes upon him. "Indeed?" was all she answered.

She stood by the table so perfectly composed and still after this acknowledgment of his remark, that Mr. Meagles stared at her under a sort of fascination, and could not even look to Clennam to make another move. After waiting, awkwardly enough, for some moments, Arthur said:

"Perhaps it would be well if Mr. Meagles could see her, Miss Wade?"

"That is easily done," said she. "Come here, child." She had opened a door while saying this, and now led the girl in by the hand. It was very curious to see them standing together: the girl with her disengaged fingers plaiting the bosom of her dress, half irresolutely, half passionately; Miss Wade with her composed face attentively regarding her, and suggesting to an observer with extraordinary force, in her composure itself (as a veil will suggest the form it covers), the unquenchable passion of her own nature.

"See here," she said, in the same level way as before. "Here is your patron, your master. He is willing to take you back, my dear, if you are sensible of the favor and choose to go. You can be, again, a foil to his pretty daughter, a slave to her pleasant wilfulness, and a toy in the house showing the goodness of the family. You can have your droll name again, playfully pointing you out and setting you apart, as it is right that you should be pointed out and set apart. (Your birth, you know; you must not forget your birth.) You can again be shown to this gentleman's daughter, Harriet, and kept before her, as a living reminder of her own superiority and her gracious condescension. You can recover all these advantages, and many more of the same kind which I dare say start up in your memory while I speak, and which you lose in taking refuge with me—you can recover them all, by telling these gentlemen how humbled and penitent you are, and by going back with them to be forgiven. What do you say, Harriet? Will you go?"

The girl who, under the influence of these words, had gradually risen in anger and heightened in colour, answered, raising her lustrous black eyes for the moment, and clenching her hand upon the folds it had been puckering up, "I'd die sooner!"

Miss Wade, still standing at her side holding her hand, looked quietly round and said with a smile, "Gentlemen! What do you do upon that?"

Poor Mr. Meagles's inexpressible consternation in hearing his motives and actions so perverted, had prevented him from interposing any word until now; but now he regained the power of speech.

"Tattycoram," said he, "for I'll call you by that name still, my good girl, conscious that I meant nothing but kindness when I gave it to you, and conscious that you know it——"

"I don't!" said she, looking up again, and almost rending herself with the same busy hand.



"No, not now, perhaps," said Mr. Meagles, "not with that lady's eyes so intent upon you, Tattycoram," she glanced at them for a moment, "and that power over you which we see she exercises; not now, perhaps, but at another time. Tattycoram, I'll not ask that lady whether she believes what she has said, even in the anger and ill blood in which I and my friend here equally know she has spoken, though she subdues herself with a determination that any one who has once seen her is not likely to forget. I'll not ask you, with your remembrance of my house and all belonging to it, whether you believe it. I'll only say that you have no profession to make to me or mine, and no forgiveness to entreat; and that all in the world that I ask you to do, is, to count five-and-twenty, Tattycoram."

She looked at him for an instant, and then said frowningly, "I won't. Miss Wade, take me away, please."

The contention that raged within her had no softening in it now; it was wholly between passionate defiance and stubborn defiance. Her rich colour, her quick blood, her rapid breath, were all setting themselves against the opportunity of retracing her steps. "I won't. I won't. I won't!" she repeated in a low, thick voice. "I'd be torn to pieces first. I'd tear myself to pieces first!"

Miss Wade, who had released her hold, laid her hand protectingly on the girl's neck for a moment, and then said, looking round with her former smile, and speaking exactly in her former tone, "Gentlemen! What do you do upon that?"

"Oh, Tattycoram, Tattycoram!" cried Mr. Meagles, adjuring her besides with an earnest hand. "Hear that lady's voice, look at that lady's face, consider what is in that lady's heart, and think what a future lies before you. My child, whatever you may think, that lady's influence over you—astonishing to us, and I should hardly go too far in saying terrible to us, to see—is founded in passion fiercer than yours and temper more violent than yours. What can you two be together? What can come of it?"

"I am alone here, gentlemen," observed Miss Wade, with no change of voice or manner. "Say anything you will."

"Politeness must yield to this misguided girl, ma'am," said Mr. Meagles, "at her present pass; though I hope not altogether to dismiss it, even with the injury you do her so strongly before me. Excuse me for reminding you in her hearing—I must say it—that you were a mystery to all of us, and had nothing in common with any of us, when she unfortunately fell in your way. I don't know what you are, but you don't hide, can't hide, what a dark spirit you have within you. If it should happen that you are a woman, who, from whatever cause, has a perverted delight in making a sister-woman as wretched as she is (I am old enough to have heard of such), I warn her against you, and I warn you against yourself."

"Gentlemen!" said Miss Wade, calmly. "When you have concluded—Mr. Clennam, perhaps you will induce your friend——"

"Not without another effort," said Mr. Meagles, stoutly. "Tattycoram, my poor dear girl, count five-and-twenty."

"Do not reject the hope, the certainty, this kind man offers you,"

said Clennam, in a low emphatic voice. "Turn to the friends you have not forgotten. Think once more!"

"I won't! Miss Wade," said the girl, with her bosom swelling high, and speaking with her hand held to her throat, "take me away!"

"Tattycoram," said Mr. Meagles. "Once more yet! The only thing I ask of you in the world, my child! Count five-and-twenty!"

She put her hands tightly over her ears, confusedly tumbling down her bright black hair in the vehemence of the action, and turned her face resolutely to the wall. Miss Wade, who had watched her under this final appeal with that strange attentive smile, and that repressing hand upon her own bosom, with which she had watched her in her struggle at Marseilles, then put her arm about her waist as if she took possession of her for evermore.

And there was a visible triumph in her face when she turned it to dismiss the visitors.

"As it is the last time I shall have this honor," she said, "and as you have spoken of not knowing what I am, and also of the foundation of my influence here, you may now know that it is founded in a common cause. What your broken plaything is as to birth, I am. She has no name, I have no name. Her wrong is my wrong. I have nothing more to say to you."

This was addressed to Mr. Meagles, who sorrowfully went out. As Clennam followed, she said to him, with the same external composure and in the same level voice, but with a smile that is only seen on cruel faces: a very faint smile, lifting the nostril, scarcely touching the lips, and not breaking away gradually, but instantly dismissed when done with:

"I hope the wife of your dear friend, Mr. Gowan, may be happy in the contrast of her extraction to this girl's and mine, and in the high good fortune that awaits her."

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### NOBODY'S DISAPPEARANCE.

Nor resting satisfied with the endeavours he had made to recover his lost charge, Mr. Meagles addressed a letter of remonstrance, breathing nothing but goodwill, not only to her, but to Miss Wade too. No answer coming to these epistles, or to another written to the stubborn girl by the hand of her late young mistress, which might have melted her if anything could (all three letters were returned weeks afterwards, as having been refused at the house-door), he deputed Mrs. Meagles to make the experiment of a personal interview. That worthy lady being unable to obtain one, and being stedfastly denied admission, Mr. Meagles besought Arthur to essay once more what he could do. All that came of his compliance was, his discovery that the empty



house was left in charge of the old woman, that Miss Wade was gone, that the waifs and strays of furniture were gone, and that the old woman would accept any number of halfcrowns and thank the donor kindly, but had no information whatever to exchange for those coins, beyond constantly offering for perusal a memorandum relative to fixtures, which the house-agent's young man had left in the hall.

Unwilling, even under this discomfiture, to resign the ingrate and leave her hopeless, in case of her better dispositions obtaining the mastery over the darker side of her character, Mr. Meagles, for six successive days, published a discreetly covert advertisement in the morning papers, to the effect that if a certain young person who had lately left home without reflection, would at any time apply at his address at Twickenham, everything would be as it had been before, and no reproaches need be apprehended. The unexpected consequences of this notification, suggested to the dismayed Mr. Meagles for the first time that some hundreds of young persons must be leaving their homes without reflection, every day; for, shoals of wrong young people came down to Twickenham, who, not finding themselves received with enthusiasm, generally demanded compensation by way of damages, in addition to coach-hire there and back. Nor were these the only uninvited clients whom the advertisement produced. The swarm of begging-letter writers who would seem to be always watching eagerly for any hook, however small, to hang a letter upon, wrote to say that having seen the advertisement, they were induced to apply with confidence for various sums, ranging from ten shillings to fifty pounds: not because they knew anything about the young person, but because they felt that to part with those donations would greatly relieve the advertiser's mind. Several projectors, likewise, availed themselves of the same opportunity to correspond with Mr. Meagles; as, for example, to apprise him that their attention having been called to the advertisement by a friend, they begged to state that if they should ever hear anything of the young person, they would not fail to make it known to him immediately, and that in the meantime if he would oblige them with the funds necessary for bringing to perfection a certain entirely novel description of Pump, the happiest results would ensue to mankind.

Mr. Meagles and his family, under these combined discouragements, had begun reluctantly to give up Tattycoram as irrecoverable, when the new and active firm of Doyce and Clennam, in their private capacities, went down on a Saturday to stay at the cottage until Monday. The senior partner took the coach, and the junior partner took his walking-stick.

A tranquil summer sunset shone upon him as he approached the end of his walk, and passed through the meadows by the river-side. He had that sense of peace, and of being lightened of a weight of care, which country quiet awakens in the breasts of dwellers in towns. Everything within his view was lovely and placid. The rich foliage of the trees, the luxuriant grass diversified with wild flowers, the little green islands in the river, the beds of rushes, the water-lilies floating on the surface of the stream, the distant voices in boats borne musically towards him on the ripple of the water and the

evening air, were all expressive of rest. In the occasional leap of a fish, or dip of an oar, or twittering of a bird not yet at roost, or distant barking of a dog, or lowing of a cow—in all such sounds, there was the prevailing breath of rest, which seemed to encompass him in every scent that sweetened the fragrant air. The long lines of red and gold in the sky, and the glorious track of the descending sun, were all divinely calm. Upon the purple tree-tops far away, and on the green height near at hand up which the shades were slowly creeping, there was an equal hush. Between the real landscape and its shadow in the water, there was no division; both were so untroubled and clear, and, while so fraught with solemn mystery of life and death, so hopefully reassuring to the gazer's soothed heart, because so tenderly and mercifully beautiful.

Clennam had stopped, not for the first time by many times, to look about him and suffer what he saw to sink into his soul, as the shadows, looked at, seemed to sink deeper and deeper into the water. He was slowly resuming his way, when he saw a figure in the path before him which he had, perhaps, already associated with the evening and its impressions.

Minnie was there, alone. She had some roses in her hand, and seemed to have stood still on seeing him, waiting for him. Her face was towards him, and she appeared to have been coming from the opposite direction. There was a flutter in her manner, which Clennam had never seen in it before; and as he came near her, it entered his mind all at once that she was there of a set purpose to speak to him.

She gave him her hand, and said, "You wonder to see me here by myself? But the evening is so lovely, I have strolled further than I meant at first. I thought it likely I might meet you, and that made me more confident. You always come this way, do you not?"

As Clennam said that it was his favourite way, he felt her hand falter on his arm, and saw the roses shake.

"Will you let me give you one, Mr. Clennam? I gathered them as I came out of the garden. Indeed, I almost gathered them for you, thinking it so likely I might meet you. Mr. Doyce arrived more than an hour ago, and told us you were walking down."

His own hand shook, as he accepted a rose or two from hers, and thanked her. They were now by an avenue of trees. Whether they turned into it on his movement or on hers, matters little. He never knew how that was.

"It is very grave here," said Clennam, "but very pleasant at this hour. Passing along this deep shade, and out at that arch of light at the other end, we come upon the ferry and the cottage by the best approach, I think."

In her simple garden-hat and her light summer dress, with her rich brown hair naturally clustering about her, and her wonderful eyes raised to his for a moment, with a look in which regard for him and trustfulness in him were strikingly blended with a kind of timid sorrow for him, she was so beautiful, that it was well for his peace—or ill for his peace, he did not quite know which—that he had made that vigorous resolution he had so often thought about.



She broke a momentary silence by enquiring if he knew that papa had been thinking of another tour abroad? He said he had heard it mentioned. She broke another momentary silence by adding, with some hesitation, that papa had abandoned the idea.

At this, he thought directly, "they are to be married."

"Mr. Clennam," she said, hesitating more timidly yet, and speaking so low that he bent his head to hear her. "I should very much like to give you my confidence, if you would not mind having the goodness to receive it. I should have very much liked to have given it to you long ago, because—I felt that you were becoming so much our friend."

"How can I be otherwise than proud of it at any time! Pray give it to me. Pray trust me."

"I could never have been afraid of trusting you," she returned, raising her eyes frankly to his face. "I think I would have done so some time ago, if I had known how. But I scarcely know how, even now."

"Mr. Gowan," said Arthur Clennam, "has reason to be very happy. God bless his wife and him!"

She wept, as she tried to thank him. He reassured her, took her hand as it lay with the trembling roses in it on his arm, took the remaining roses from it, and put it to his lips. At that time, it seemed to him, he first finally resigned the dying hope that had flickered in nobody's heart, so much to its pain and trouble; and from that time he became in his own eyes, as to any similar hope or prospect, a very much older man who had done with that part of life.

He put the roses in his breast and they walked on for a little while, slowly and silently, under the umbrageous trees. Then he asked her, in a voice of cheerful kindness, was there anything else that she would say to him as her friend and her father's friend, many years older than herself; was there any trust she would repose in him, any service she would ask of him, any little aid to her happiness that she could give him the lasting gratification of believing it was in his power to render?

She was going to answer, when she was so touched by some little hidden sorrow or sympathy—what could it have been?—that she said, bursting into tears, again: "O, Mr. Clennam! Good, generous, Mr. Clennam, pray tell me you do not blame me."

"I blame you?" said Clennam. "My dearest girl! I blame you? No!"

After clasping both her hands upon his arm, and looking confidentially up into his face, with some hurried words to the effect that she thanked him from her heart (as indeed she did, if it be the source of earnestness), she gradually composed herself, with now and then a word of encouragement from him, as they walked on slowly and almost silently under the darkening trees.

"And, now, Minnie Gowan," at length, said Clennam, smiling; "will you ask me nothing?"

"Oh! I have very much to ask of you."

"That's well! I hoped so; I am not disappointed."

"You know how I am loved at home, and how I love home. You can hardly think it perhaps, dear Mr. Clennam," she spoke with

great agitation, "seeing me going from it of my own free will and choice, but I do so dearly love it!"

"I am sure of that," said Clennam. "Can you suppose I doubt it!"

"No, no. But it is strange, even to me, that loving it so much and being so much beloved in it, I can bear to cast it away. It seems so neglectful of it, so unthankful."

"My dear girl," said Clennam, "it is in the natural progress and change of time. All homes are left so."

"Yes, I know; but all homes are not left with such a blank in them as there will be in mine when I am gone. Not that there is any scarcity of far better and more endearing and more accomplished girls than I am; not that I am much; but that they have made so much of me!"

Pet's affectionate heart was overcharged, and she sobbed while she pictured what would happen.

"I know what a change papa will feel at first, and I know that at first I cannot be to him anything like what I have been these many years. And it is then, Mr. Clennam, then more than at any time, that I beg and entreat you to remember him, and sometimes to keep him company when you can spare a little while; and to tell him that you know I was fonder of him, when I left him, than I ever was in all my life. For there is nobody—he told me so himself when he talked to me this very day—there is nobody he likes so well as you, or trusts so much."

A clue to what had passed between the father and daughter dropped like a heavy stone into the well of Clennam's heart, and swelled the water to his eyes. He said, cheerily, but not quite so cheerily as he tried to say, that it should be done: that he gave her his faithful promise.

"If I do not speak of mamma," said Pet, more moved by, and more pretty in, her innocent grief, than Clennam could trust himself even now to consider—for which reason he counted the trees between them, and the fading light as they slowly diminished in number—"it is because mamma will understand me better in this action, and will feel my loss in a different way, and will look forward in a different manner. But you know what a dear, devoted mother she is, and you will remember her, too; will you not?"

Let Minnie trust him, Clennam said, let Minnie trust him to do all she wished.

"And, dear Mr. Clennam," said Minnie, "because papa and one whom I need not name, do not fully appreciate and understand one another yet, as they will by-and-by; and because it will be the duty, and the pride, and pleasure of my new life, to draw them to a better knowledge of one another, and to be a happiness to one another, and to be proud of one another, and to love one another, both loving me so dearly; O, as you are a kind, true man! when I am first separated from home (I am going a long distance away), try to reconcile papa to him a little more, and use your great influence to keep him before papa's mind, free from prejudice and in his real form. Will you do this for me, as you are a noble-hearted friend?"



Poor Pet! Self-deceived, mistaken child! When were such changes ever made in men's natural relations to one another: when was such reconciliation of ingrain differences ever effected! It has been tried many times by other daughters, Minnie; it has never succeeded; nothing has ever come of it but failure.

So Clennam thought. So he did not say; it was too late. He bound himself to do all she asked, and she knew full well that he would do it.

They were now at the last tree in the avenue. She stopped, and withdrew her arm. Speaking to him with her eyes lifted up to his, and with the hand that had lately rested on his sleeve tremblingly touching one of the roses in his breast as an additional appeal to him, she said:

"Dear Mr. Clennam, in my happiness—for I am happy, though you have seen me crying—I cannot bear to leave any cloud between us. If you have anything to forgive me (not anything that I have wilfully done, but any trouble I may have caused you without meaning it, or having it in my power to help it), forgive me to-night out of your noble heart!"

He stooped to meet the guileless face that met his without shrinking. He kissed it, and answered, Heaven knew that he had nothing to forgive. As he stooped to meet the innocent face once again, she whispered "Good bye!" and he repeated it. It was taking leave of all his old hopes—all nobody's old restless doubts. They came out of the avenue next moment, arm-in-arm as they had entered it; and the trees seemed to close up behind them in the darkness, like their own perspective of the past.

The voices of Mr. and Mrs. Meagles, and Doyce, were audible directly, speaking near the garden gate. Hearing Pet's name among them, Clennam called out "She is here, with me." There was some little wondering and laughing until they came up; but as soon as they had all come together, it ceased, and Pet glided away.

Mr. Meagles, Doyce, and Clennam, without speaking, walked up and down on the brink of the river, in the light of the rising moon, for a few minutes; and then Doyce lingered behind, and went into the house. Mr. Meagles and Clennam walked up and down together for a few minutes more without speaking, until at length the former broke silence.

"Arthur," said he, using that familiar address for the first time in their communication, "do you remember my telling you, as we walked up and down one hot morning, looking over the harbor at Marseilles, that Pet's baby sister who was dead seemed to Mother and me to have grown as she had grown, and changed as she had changed?"

"Very well."

"You remember my saying that our thoughts had never been able to separate those twin sisters, and that in our fancy whatever Pet was, the other was?"

"Yes, very well."

"Arthur," said Mr. Meagles, much subdued, "I carry that fancy further to-night. I feel to-night, my dear fellow, as if you had loved my dead child very tenderly, and had lost her when she was like what Pet is now."

"Thank you," murmured Clennam, "thank you!" And pressed his hand.

"Will you come in?" said Mr. Meagles, presently.

"In a little while."

Mr. Meagles fell away, and he was left alone. When he had walked on the river's brink in the peaceful moonlight, for some half-an-hour, he put his hand in his breast and tenderly took out the handful of roses. Perhaps he put them to his heart, perhaps he put them to his lips, but certainly he bent down on the shore, and gently launched them on the flowing river. Pale and unreal in the moonlight, the river floated them away.

The lights were bright within doors when he entered, and the faces on which they shone, his own face not excepted, were soon quietly cheerful. They talked of many subjects (his partner never had had such a ready store to draw upon for the beguiling of the time), and so to bed, and to sleep. While the flowers, pale and unreal in the moonlight, floated away upon the river; and thus do greater things that once were in our breasts, and near our hearts, flow from us to the eternal seas.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### MRS. FLINTWINCH GOES ON DREAMING.

THE house in the city preserved its heavy dullness through all these transactions, and the invalid within it turned the same unvarying round of life. Morning, noon, and night, morning, noon, and night, each recurring with its accompanying monotony, always the same reluctant return of the same sequences of machinery, like a dragging piece of clockwork.

The wheeled chair had its associated remembrances and reveries, one may suppose, as every place that is made the station of a human being has. Pictures of demolished streets and altered houses, as they formerly were when the occupant of the chair was familiar with them; images of people as they too used to be, with little or no allowance made for the lapse of time since they were seen; of these, there must have been many in the long routine of gloomy days. To stop the clock of busy existence, at the hour when we were personally sequestered from it; to suppose mankind stricken motionless, when we were brought to a stand-still; to be unable to measure the changes beyond our view, by any larger standard than the shrunk one of our own uniform and contracted existence; is the infirmity of many invalids, and the mental unhealthiness of almost all recluses.

What scenes and actors the stern woman most reviewed, as she sat from season to season in her one dark room, none knew but herself. Mr. Flintwinch, with his wry presence brought to bear



upon her daily like some eccentric mechanical force, would perhaps have screwed it out of her, if there had been less resistance in her; but she was too strong for him. So far as Mistress Affery was concerned, to regard her liege-lord and her disabled mistress with a face of blank wonder, to go about the house after dark with her apron over her head, always to listen for the strange noises and sometimes to hear them, and never to emerge from her ghostly, dreamy, sleep-waking state, was occupation enough for her.

There was a fair stroke of business doing, as Mistress Affery made out, for her husband had abundant occupation in his little office, and saw more people than had been used to come there for some years. This might easily be, the house having been long deserted; but he did receive letters, and comers, and keep books, and correspond. Moreover, he went about to other counting-houses, and to wharves, and docks, and to the Custom House, and to Garraway's Coffee House, and the Jerusalem Coffee House, and on 'Change; so that he was much in and out. He began, too, sometimes of an evening, when Mrs. Clennam expressed no particular wish for his society, to resort to a tavern in the neighbourhood to look at the shipping news and closing prices in the evening paper, and even to exchange small socialities with mercantile Sea Captains who frequented that establishment. At some period of every day, he and Mrs. Clennam held a council on matters of business; and it appeared to Affery, who was always groping about, listening and watching, that the two clever ones were making money.

The state of mind into which Mr. Flintwinch's dazed lady had fallen, had now begun to be so expressed in all her looks and actions, that she was held in very low account by the two clever ones, as a person, never of strong intellect, who was becoming foolish. Perhaps because her appearance was not of a commercial cast, or perhaps because it occurred to him that his having taken her to wife might expose his judgment to doubt in the minds of customers, Mr. Flintwinch laid his commands upon her that she should hold her peace on the subject of their conjugal relations, and should no longer call him Jeremiah out of the domestic trio. Her frequent forgetfulness of this admonition intensified her startled manner, since Mr. Flintwinch's habit of avenging himself on her remissness by making springs after her on the staircase, and shaking her, occasioned her to be always nervously uncertain when she might be thus waylaid next.

Little Dorrit had finished a long day's work in Mrs. Clennam's room, and was neatly gathering up her shreds and odds and ends before going home. Mr. Pancks, whom Affery had just shown in, was addressing an enquiry to Mrs. Clennam on the subject of her health, coupled with the remark that, "happening to find himself in that direction," he had looked in to enquire, on behalf of his proprietor, how she found herself. Mrs. Clennam, with a deep contraction of her brows, was looking at him.

"Mr. Casby knows," said she, "that I am not subject to changes. The change that I await here is the great change."

"Indeed, ma'am?" returned Mr. Pancks, with a wandering eye

towards the figure of the little seamstress on her knee picking threads and frayings of her work from the carpet. "You look nicely, ma'am."

"I bear what I have to bear," she answered. "Do you what you have to do."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Mr. Pancks; "such is my endeavour."

"You are often in this direction, are you not?" asked Mrs. Clennam.

"Why yes, ma'am," said Pancks, "rather so lately; I have lately been round this way a good deal, owing to one thing and another."

"Beg Mr. Casby and his daughter not to trouble themselves, by deputy, about me. When they wish to see me, they know I am here to see them. They have no need to trouble themselves to send. You have no need to trouble yourself to come."

"Not the least trouble, ma'am," said Mr. Pancks. "You really are looking uncommonly nicely, ma'am."

"Thank you. Good evening."

The dismissal, and its accompanying finger pointed straight at the door, was so curt and direct that Mr. Pancks did not see his way to prolonging his visit. He stirred up his hair with his sprightliest expression, glanced at the little figure again, said "Good evening, ma'am; don't come down, Mrs. Affery; I know the road to the door," and steamed out. Mrs. Clennam, her chin resting on her hand, followed him with attentive and darkly distrustful eyes; and Affery stood looking at her, as if she were spell-bound.

Slowly and thoughtfully, Mrs. Clennam's eyes turned from the door by which Pancks had gone out, to Little Dorrit, rising from the carpet. With her chin drooping more heavily on her hand, and her eyes vigilant and lowering, the sick woman sat looking at her until she attracted her attention. Little Dorrit colored under such a gaze, and looked down. Mrs. Clennam still sat intent.

"Little Dorrit," she said when she at last broke silence, "what do you know of that man?"

"I don't know anything of him, ma'am, except that I have seen him about, and that he has spoken to me."

"What has he said to you?"

"I don't understand what he has said, he is so strange. But nothing rough or disagreeable."

"Why does he come here to see you?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said Little Dorrit, with perfect frankness.

"You know that he does come here to see you?"

"I have fancied so," said Little Dorrit. "But why he should come here or anywhere, for that, ma'am, I can't think."

Mrs. Clennam cast her eyes towards the ground, and with her strong, set face, as intent upon a subject in her mind as it had lately been upon the form that seemed to pass out of her view, sat absorbed. Some minutes elapsed before she came out of this thoughtfulness, and resumed her hard composure.

Little Dorrit in the meanwhile had been waiting to go, but afraid to disturb her by moving. She now ventured to leave the spot where she had been standing since she had risen, and to pass gently round



by the wheeled chair. She stopped at its side to say "Good night, ma'am."

Mrs. Clennam put out her hand, and laid it on her arm. Little Dorrit, confused under the touch, stood faltering. Perhaps some momentary recollection of the story of the Princess may have been in her mind.

"Tell me, Little Dorrit," said Mrs. Clennam. "Have you many friends now?"

"Very few, ma'am. Besides you, only Miss Flora and—one more."

"Meaning," said Mrs. Clennam, with her unbent finger again pointing to the door, "that man?"

"Oh no, ma'am!"

"Some friend of his, perhaps?"

"No, ma'am." Little Dorrit earnestly shook her head. "Oh no! No one at all like him, or belonging to him."

"Well!" said Mrs. Clennam, almost smiling. "It is no affair of mine. I ask, because I take an interest in you; and because I believe I was your friend, when you had no other who could serve you. Is that so?"

"Yes, ma'am; indeed it is. I have been here many a time when, but for you and the work you gave me, we should have wanted everything."

"We," repeated Mrs. Clennam, looking towards the watch, once her dead husband's, which always lay upon her table. "Are there many of you?"

"Only father and I, now. I mean, only father and I to keep regularly out of what we get."

"Have you undergone many privations? You and your father, and who else there may be of you?" asked Mrs. Clennam, speaking deliberately, and meditatively turning the watch over and over.

"Sometimes it has been rather hard to live," said Little Dorrit, in her soft voice, and timid uncomplaining way; "but I think not harder—as to that—than many people find it."

"That's well said!" Mrs. Clennam quickly returned. "That's the truth! You are a good, thoughtful girl. You are a grateful girl too, or I much mistake you."

"It is only natural to be that. There is no merit in being that," said Little Dorrit. "I am indeed."

Mrs. Clennam, with a gentleness of which the dreaming Affery had never dreamed her to be capable, drew down the face of her little seamstress, and kissed her on the forehead.

"Now go, Little Dorrit," said she, "or you will be late, poor child!"

In all the dreams Mistress Affery had been piling up since she first became devoted to the pursuit, she had dreamed nothing more astonishing than this. Her head ached with the idea that she would find the other clever one kissing Little Dorrit next, and then the two clever ones embracing each other and dissolving into tears of tenderness for all mankind. The idea quite stunned her, as she attended the light footsteps down the stairs, that the house-door might be safely shut.

On opening it to let Little Dorrit out, she found Mr. Pancks, instead of having gone his way, as in any less wonderful place and among less wonderful phenomena he might have been reasonably expected to do, fluttering up and down the court outside the house. The moment he saw Little Dorrit, he passed her briskly, said with his finger to his nose (as Mistress Affery distinctly heard), "Pancks the gipsy, fortune-telling," and went away. "Lord save us, here's a gipsy and a fortune-teller in it now!" cried Mistress Affery. "What next!"

She stood at the open door, staggering herself with this enigma, on a rainy, thundery evening. The clouds were flying fast, the wind was coming up in gusts, banging some neighbouring shutters that had broken loose, twirling the rusty chimney-cowls and weathercocks, and rushing round and round a confined adjacent churchyard as if it had a mind to blow the dead citizens out of their graves. The low thunder, muttering in all quarters of the sky at once, seemed to threaten vengeance for this attempted desecration, and to mutter, "Let them rest! Let them rest!"

Mistress Affery, whose fear of thunder and lightning was only to be equalled by her dread of the haunted house with a premature and preternatural darkness in it, stood undecided whether to go in or not, until the question was settled for her by the door blowing upon her in a violent gust of wind and shutting her out. "What's to be done now, what's to be done now!" cried Mistress Affery, wringing her hands in this last uneasy dream of all; "when she's all alone by herself inside, and can no more come down to open it than the churchyard dead themselves!"

In this dilemma, Mistress Affery, with her apron as a hood to keep the rain off, ran crying up and down the solitary paved enclosure several times. Why she should then stoop down and look in at the keyhole of the door, as if an eye would open it, it would be difficult to say; but it is none the less what most people would have done in the same situation, and it is what she did.

From this posture she started up suddenly, with a half scream, feeling something on her shoulder. It was the touch of a hand; of a man's hand.

The man was dressed like a traveller, in a foraging cap with fur about it, and a heap of cloak. He looked like a foreigner. He had a quantity of hair and moustache—jet black, except at the shaggy ends, where it had a tinge of red—and a high hook nose. He laughed at Mistress Affery's start and cry; and, as he laughed, his moustache went up under his nose, and his nose came down over his moustache.

"What's the matter?" he asked in plain English. "What are you frightened at?"

"At you," panted Affery.

"Me, madam?"

"And the dismal evening, and—and everything," said Affery. "And here! The wind has been and blown the door to, and I can't get in."

"Hah!" said the gentleman, who took that very coolly. "Indeed! Do you know such a name as Clennam about here?"



"Lord bless us, I should think I did, I should think I did!" cried Affery, exasperated into a new wringing of hands by the enquiry.

"Where about here?"

"Where!" cried Affery, goaded into another inspection of the key-hole. "Where but here in this house? And she's all alone in her room, and lost the use of her limbs and can't stir to help herself or me, and the t'other clever one's out, and Lord forgive me!" cried Affery, driven into a frantic dance by these accumulated considerations, "if I ain't a-going headlong out of my mind!"

Taking a warmer view of the matter now that it concerned himself, the gentleman stepped back to glance at the house, and his eyes soon rested on the long narrow window of the little room near the hall-door.

"Where may the lady be who has lost the use of her limbs, madam?" he enquired, with that peculiar smile which Mistress Affery could not choose but keep her eyes upon.

"Up there!" said Affery. "Them two windows."

"Hah! I am of a fair size, but could not have the honor of presenting myself in that room without a ladder. Now, madam, frankly—frankness is a part of my character—shall I open the door for you?"

"Yes, bless you, sir, for a dear creetur, and do it at once," cried Affery, "for she may be a calling to me at this very present minute, or may be setting herself a fire and burning herself to death, or there's no knowing what may be happening to her, and me a-going out of my mind at thinking of it!"

"Stay, my good madam!" He restrained her impatience with a smooth white hand. "Business-hours, I apprehend, are over for the day?"

"Yes, yes, yes," cried Affery. "Long ago."

"Let me make, then, a fair proposal. Fairness is a part of my character. I am just landed from the packet-boat, as you may see." He showed her that his cloak was very wet, and that his boots were saturated with water; she had previously observed that he was dishevelled and sallow, as if from a rough voyage, and so chilled that he could not keep his teeth from chattering. "I am just landed from the packet-boat, madam, and have been delayed by the weather; the infernal weather! In consequence of this, madam, some necessary business that I should otherwise have transacted here within the regular hours (necessary business because money-business), still remains to be done. Now, if you will fetch any authorised neighbouring somebody to do it, in return for my opening the door, I'll open the door. If this arrangement should be objectionable, I'll——" and with the same smile he made a significant feint of backing away.

Mistress Affery, heartily glad to effect the proposed compromise, gave in her willing adhesion to it. The gentleman at once requested her to do him the favor of holding his cloak, took a short run at the narrow window, made a leap at the sill, clung his way up the bricks, and in a moment had his hand at the sash, raising it. His eyes looked so very sinister, as he put his leg into the room and glanced round at Mistress Affery, that she thought, with a sudden

coldness, if he were to go straight up stairs to murder the invalid, what could she do to prevent him?"

Happily he had no such purpose; for he re-appeared, in a moment, at the house-door. "Now, my dear madam," he said, as he took back his cloak and threw it on, "if you'll have the goodness to——what the Devil's that!"

The strangest of sounds. Evidently close at hand from the peculiar shock it communicated to the air, yet subdued as if it were far off. A tremble, a rumble, and a fall of some light dry matter.

"What the Devil is it?"

"I don't know what it is, but I've heard the like of it over and over again," said Affery, who had caught his arm.

He could hardly be a very brave man, even she thought in her dreamy start and fright, for his trembling lips had turned colorless. After listening a few moments, he made light of it.

"Bah! Nothing! Now, my dear madam, I think you spoke of some clever personage. Will you be so good as to confront me with that genius?" He held the door in his hand, as though he were quite ready to shut her out again if she failed.

"Don't you say anything about the door and me, then," whispered Affery.

"Not a word."

"And don't you stir from here, or speak if she calls, while I run round the corner."

"Madam, I am a statue."

Affery had so vivid a fear of his going stealthily up stairs the moment her back was turned, that, after hurrying out of sight, she returned to the gateway to peep at him. Seeing him still on the threshold, more out of the house than in it, as if he had no love for darkness and no desire to probe its mysteries, she flew into the next street, and sent a message into the tavern to Mr. Flintwinch who came out directly. The two returning together—the lady in advance, and Mr. Flintwinch coming up briskly behind, animated with the hope of shaking her before she could get housed—saw the gentleman standing in the same place in the dark, and heard the strong voice of Mrs. Clennam calling from her room, "Who is it? What is it? Why does no one answer? Who *is* that, down there?"



# DR. DE JONGH'S LIGHT BROWN



## COD LIVER OIL,

PREPARED IN THE LOFFODEN ISLES, NORWAY:

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**OF CONSUMPTION, BRONCHITIS, ASTHMA,  
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### EDGAR

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RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF CLARENDON.

THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR.

RIGHT HON. LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

RIGHT HON. LORD PALMERSTON.

RIGHT HON. SIR JAMES GRAHAM.

RIGHT HON. SIR CHARLES WOOD.

RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF HARROWBY.

RIGHT HON. SIDNEY HERBERT, M.P.

RIGHT HON. LORD CANNING, Governor-

General of India.

THE EARL OF WICKLOW.

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE.

MOST NOBLE THE MARQUIS OF AYLESBURY.

RIGHT HON. THE EARL GRANVILLE.

RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF ABERDEEN.

RIGHT HON. THE LORD PANMURE.

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marvellously cheap in the market."

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dicinal virtues of this remedy, no doubt can reasonably  
be entertained that this specimen [Dr. DE JONGH's  
Light-Brown Cod Liver Oil] possesses them; and this  
it is of importance to establish at a time when much  
impure and adulterated Oil is offered for sale, and  
freely accepted by practitioners as sufficient for the  
purposes of routine practice."



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**EDGAR**

Translator

"BECQUEL and RODIER'S RESEARCHES ON THE  
BLOOD," &c. &c.  
"Dr. Sheppard has made extensive use of Dr. DE  
JONGH's Light-Brown Cod Liver Oil, and has great  
pleasure in testifying to its superiority over every other  
preparation to be met with in this country. It has the  
rare excellence of being well borne and assimilated by  
stomachs which reject the ordinary Oils. Dr. Shep-  
pard has no hesitation in stating that he believes an  
Imperial Pint of Dr. DE JONGH's Light-Brown Oil to  
be of more value than an Imperial Quart of any other  
to be met with in London."

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impure and adulterated Oil is offered for sale, and  
freely accepted by practitioners as sufficient for the  
purposes of routine practice."



THE  
**GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY**  
(Limited).

THIS COMPANY has been organized in conformity with the 18, 19 Vict. cap. 133, with a Paid-up Capital of £10,000, with power to increase it to £100,000, in consequence of the exposure in the pages of the LANCET, and before the Committee of the House of Commons, of the very general prevalence of ADULTERATION and SOPHISTICATION of DRUGS and CHEMICALS employed for Medical purposes.

IN the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons of last Session (1855), the following passage occurs in the evidence of Dr. Thomson, of St. Thomas's Hospital, after describing a long list of most important medicines which he had examined and found to be adulterated :—

MR. VILLIERS asks : Are the experiments you have made of recent date ?

*Ans.* All within the last eighteen months.

VISCOUNT EBRINGTON : Have you often heard medical men complain that the uncertainty they felt, as to the way in which their prescriptions were made up, has greatly embarrassed them in their treatment of their patients ? *Ans.* I have ; it is a constant complaint.

*Question.* When they write a prescription, they do not know whether the medicine, as made up, will really contain the elements which are there specified ? *Ans.* They do not.

*Q.* And that is a feeling which is pretty general in the Profession is it ? *Ans.* It is.

*Q.* Have you any doubt of the generality and extent of the evil ? *Ans.* Not the least.

*Q.* It is, of course, a great evil that Drugs should be thus adulterated ? *Ans.* An enormous evil.

*Q.* The Public, you think, is perfectly helpless ; the principle, *caveat emptor*, may sound very well in Parliament, but it is perfectly inoperative as regards the adulteration of Drugs ? *Ans.* Perfectly so.

Dr. Hassall, Dr. Normandy, John Simon, M. Scanlan, R. Warrington, Esqs., Sir J. Gordon, and many other scientific Chemists examined by the Committee, bore similar testimony to the prevalent adulteration and sophistication of Drugs and Chemicals.

The testimony of so many independent and disinterested witnesses, whose scientific character renders their evidence quite unimpeachable, is calculated to excite a great and well-founded alarm in the public mind, and to throw doubt upon the value of the science of medicine. It would be indeed deplorable could no better guarantee for the honest preparation and sale of unadulterated medicines be found than the appointment of a few Government Inspectors,—the only remedy suggested to the Committee. Such a course would obviously be efficient only by the establishment of a medical and chemical police as numerous as the officers of excise in the days of Pitt ; a method scarcely to be expected from any Government.

A far more practical and practicable plan has appeared to the promoters of this Company to be opened by the Acts relating to Joint Stock Companies, with the new feature of limited liability of the shareholders. *Such a Company has been formed, with an adequate capital, under the direction of Medical Men, assisted by scientific Chemists, who have erected drug-mills and fitted up laboratories to prepare every variety of medicinal agents, and to offer them to the Profession and the Public, with the perfect assurance of their being always the substance they intend to purchase, or prescribe, without adulteration, and of the best quality that*

*the markets afford, and this always at moderate prices.* The expediency, or rather the necessity, for the enterprise contemplated by the General Apothecaries' Company (limited) must be evident to every person who considers the subject.

"It must, however, be observed, that the Parliamentary inquiry extended only to such adulterations and sophistications of Drugs and Chemicals as could be detected by chemical tests, analysis, or the microscope. A very large proportion of medicines as they reach patients, are compounds of such a nature that these methods of examination are inefficient. Tinctures, extracts, decoctions, infusions, confections, pills, ointments, &c., are many of them so compounded as to defy scientific inquiry as to their purity, or their being properly prepared in accordance with the directions of the Colleges in the Pharmacopœias. There is abundant trustworthy evidence to prove that it is the prevailing custom to fabricate these with worthless materials, the worst samples of the drugs they contain, or to substitute cheaper materials in the place of those ordered.

"The use of private formulæ, instead of the authorised," says one Chemist, "is so extensive as to render the Pharmacopœia a dead letter, an obsolete code of medical legislation;" and he adds, "Expensive Drugs may be expunged from the list of *Materia Medica*."


This evil is altogether independent of fraudulent intentions on the part of retail Druggists. They are often confessedly unable to protect themselves from the purchase of spurious articles. Thus Dr. Hassall found, in thirty-two samples of opium powder, purchased at different shops, only one containing the due amount of morphia, the principle on which its remedial efficacy depends. The difficulty of ascertaining such a fact must be insuperable to the majority of persons engaged in dispensing Medicines; and yet the life of a patient may be involved in the strength or weakness of the opium used in his Physician's prescription. There are a multitude of energetic remedies far less amenable to scientific discrimination than powdered opium!

The conclusion is irresistible, that the Professional Man for his character, and the Public for relief in sickness, must depend upon the good faith and honesty, together with the scientific skill available to the dispenser of their Medicines.

THE GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY (limited), on public grounds, claims the support of the Profession, and of all persons interested in their own health and the general welfare, or who regard commercial integrity. *The Directors announce their intention to subject to the strictest scrutiny every natural production, or manufactured article they purchase; to test, and analyze scientifically, all those to which these methods are applicable; to prepare all compounds strictly according to the several Pharmacopœias of Great Britain, America, and other countries, under the inspection of a SCIENTIFIC CHEMIST; to employ duly qualified assistants for dispensing prescriptions; to sell everything under its own proper designation, without adulteration, sophistication, or substitution.* And they trust that they shall thus minister to the attainment of greater certainty in the Art of Healing, and confer a real benefit on society. Moreover, it will be their constant endeavour to advance the Science of Medicine, by improving the forms and preparations of remedies of established reputation, and by introducing from all countries such new medicinal agents as the progress of the sciences of botany, mineralogy, or chemistry may bring to light. And they respectfully invite the assistance of all persons to whom such agents may be known, from whom information on the subject will be thankfully acknowledged.

**49, Berners Street, London, 1856.**

\* \* \* The Premises and Laboratories of the Company are open to the inspection of all respectable persons, on forwarding their cards to the Manager.

 *Prescriptions sent by Post, with Money Order, or a Reference in Town, will be immediately forwarded.*

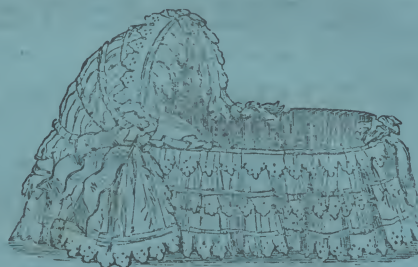


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Round and Gothic Waiters, Cake and Bread Baskets, equally low.

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